

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 /031 W

----- 059119

R 051000Z JUNE 75

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4913

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

USIA WASHDC

CONFIDENTIAL MASERU 571

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PINS, LT

SUBJECT: ARREST OF JOURNALIST

REF: MASERU 557

1. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE POLICE SOURCE THAT JOURNALIST MIKE PITSO HELD BY GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT CONSIDERED IT HAD EVIDENCE HE IS IN EMPLOYMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN BUREAU OF STATE SECURITY (BOSS).

2. LESOTHO HAS NUMEROUS BOSS INFORMERS AND USUAL GOL PROCEDURE IS TO GIVE THOSE UNCOVERED A STERN LECTURE AND HINT OF TOUGHER ACTION IF THEY PERSIST. TO BEST OUR KNOWLEDGE NO CRIMINAL CHARGES YET MADE FOR THIS ACTIVITY, PROBABLY BECAUSE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF DETAILS OF INFORMER NETWORK WOULD BE HIGHLY EMBARRASSING TO SOME SENIOR LESOTHO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

3. IN PITSO'S CASE, WE DOUBT HE COULD HAVE BEEN IN POSITION TO PASS MUCH OF VALUE TO BOSS AND IT NOT IMPROVABLE GOL SEIZED ON HIS SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS CONNECTION IN SUCH A WAY AS TO TRY TO

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INTIMIDATE HIM. GOL APPARENTLY NOT HAPPY WITH SOME OF HIS REPORTING FOR RAND DAILY MAIL AND MAY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE A POINT WITH LOCAL JOURNALISTS BY ARRESTING PITSO, WHO IN EXPOSED POSITION AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF NEWLY-FORMED LESOTHO UNION OF JOURNALISTS.

4. PITSO, IN GOOD SPIRITS AFTER RELEASE, REPORTS HE WAS WELL TREATED. HE IS NOT COMMENTING ON REASON FOR HIS ONE-WEEK DETENTION.

HAUGHT

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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TAGS: PINS, LT, (PITSO, MIKE)
To: STATE
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